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Countdown

Every Week, You Can Count on Countdown!

Last week marked the end of DC's first year-long weekly megaseries—and now, seven days later, the company is following up the hit ***52*** with a *second* weekly series, ***Countdown.*** While the length (one year) and the frequency (weekly) may be the same, there are a lot of differences between this year-long series and its predecessor.

While ***52*** took place during DC's "missing year" and thus could not tie in to ongoing DC Universe storylines, the situation is quite different with ***Countdown.*** The saga takes place in real time in current DC continuity, which means that tie-ins are not merely a possibility, but a *certainty*. Furthermore, ***Countdown's*** creators will be free to use DC's entire pantheon of heroes, including the Big Three—Superman, Batman, and Wonder Woman.

The man in charge of ***Countdown*** is editor *Michael Marts,* who is working with an all-star creative team headed by *Paul Dini;* the creative roster includes layout artist/designer *Keith Giffen,* writers *Jimmy Palmiotti, Justin Gray, Sean McKeever, Tony Bedard, & Adam Beechen,* and a cadre of artists that includes *Jesus Saiz, Jim Calafiore, Carlos Magno, David Lopez, & Al Barrioneuvo.*

"The mastermind of this project is none other than the great *Paul Dini,*" Marts explained. "***Countdown*** was conceived a bit differently than ***52*** in that we decided to model it after the television writing format—different issue/episode writers working on each installment but all answering to an executive writer or 'showrunner.' Because of this we knew we needed someone with experience in both comic books and television. Who better than *Paul Dini*? With his extensive experience in TV animation and comics, Paul was the perfect fit."

Did the concept for ***Countdown*** begin with Dini, or did the concept come first and Dini join the team afterwards? "Many of the initial ideas for the storylines came from the unique mind of *Dan DiDio,*" Marts said. "From there, we relied on Paul (with the help of layout artist *Keith Giffen*) to flesh out the ideas and expand them into a master outline. We were surprised—pleasantly, of course!—at how quickly Paul structured this skeleton of ideas into a full-blown weekly storyfest!"

Just how difficult is it to edit a project of this magnitude? "Oh, you know, it's a walk in the park!" Marts said with a laugh. "Just kidding. It's unlike anything I've ever worked on. Six different writers, seven artists, just as many inkers and colorists... it's a challenge.

"That being said, it's my cup of tea. It's the type of challenge I thrive on. I love the fast-paced energy that goes along with this series—it's constantly moving, it's non-stop. It's fun!"

Marts described the process of overseeing ***Countdown*** as "challenging, for sure, but not as complex as some might think. The fact that ***Countdown*** takes place in real-time, running parallel to current DC continuity, actually *helps* the writers in that we have all of the plots and outlines of the various DC monthlies at our disposal. So it's been fairly easy to plan tie-ins to other titles and weave ***Countdown*** into the major events of the DCU for the next year."

Is it easier to work with different creative writers on different issues, rather than utilizing a collaborative team as was done with ***52?*** "That's difficult to answer because I didn't have the opportunity of working on ***52*** with their collaborative team-writing method," Marts said. "It's absolutely mind-blowing when you think about what those four guys accomplished—a true feat.

"But if I were to go into a project cold I'd probably pick the writing method we're currently using with ***Countdown***. I'm really enjoying the writing process of the project thus far."

Traffic management is a major part of any weekly project; Marts offers an example of just how complex the planning can be. "As of this writing, ***Countdown #51*** colors have just been finalized and is ready to leave for the printer; ***#47*** lettering proofs just came in; pencils on ***#40*** are all done; layouts on ***#35*** are being worked on; and this week, we have a plot conference scheduled for ***#28.***" That's right—even before readers have seen the first issue of ***Countdown,*** the writing team is in conference to plan stories that won't appear for six months!

Is the entire creative team involved in every one of these story conferences? "Not all writers are involved in every plot conference—but once there is something to read on paper, everyone's distributed a copy. So basically, everyone's up to speed all of the time."

While it might seem to readers that coordinating the tie-ins would be the most challenging of all, Marts said that "it's not that difficult. We have a great editorial group here at DC; we share all plots that come in and have meetings to discuss where and when it's best to schedule a tie-in."

As to which characters might play a role in the series (and thereby whose books might offer possibilities for a tie-in story), Marts points out that the more proper question might be which characters *won't* be involved. "Almost everyone in the DCU will be seen at some point during this 52-part epic, but I think it's some of the secondary characters being featured that will really capture readers' attention."

And speaking of secondary characters—why is Jimmy Olsen apparently playing such a major role in this series? "Why not?" Marts replied. "He's quite possibly the most popular supporting character of all time. Doesn't he deserve to die—er, I mean, be featured in his own storyline?"

And what about Ray Palmer—what's the former Atom's role in all of this? "Who ever said Ray Palmer was involved?" Marts replied with a smile.

The first piece of promotional art made it clear that the DC Multiverse would play an important role in ***Countdown*** (just take a look at the versions of Batman, Robin, and Flash depicted on that image if you have any doubts). So how "multi" are we talking here? "As multi as *Dan DiDio* allows!" Marts said.

Will a single version of each character appear throughout the series, or is there a chance that, say, we might see different multiverse takes on Batman or other iconic DC characters? "We'll have to wait and see!" Marts said, carefully avoiding giving away too many details and thus spoiling the surprise.

With ***Countdown's*** current continuity connections, will the events of the weekly series pave the way for the launch of new series and miniseries throughout the duration of its 52-week run, or will DC hold off on spinoffs until the series wraps in 2008? "We'll see projects spinning out of ***Countdown*** during its run," Marts said, although he declined to identify any of those spinoffs at this time.

The question of deadlines has to have arisen editorially, considering the fact that a number of high-profile titles have seen juggled schedules due to deadline problems recently. With a weekly series, "there absolutely no leeway at all," Marts acknowledged. "Because of that, we turn materials around as quickly as possible and hold a story conference every week. We also have a great rotation of both writers and artists that are respected and known for their ability to meet deadlines."

Since the series is entitled ***Countdown,*** it's only natural to wonder: what are we counting down to? "Oh, come on! What are you trying to do, trip me up? Nice try!" Marts joked. "But I will say this: we are counting down to something *big*."

The countdown begins this week with the release of ***Countdown #51,*** and continues every seven days for the next year, culminating with the release of ***Countdown #0*** in early May of 2008.

by Cliff Biggers

Courtesy your friendly neighborhood comics outlet!

Comic Shop Newsarama

Produced by Comic Shop News in cooperation with Matt Brady and newsarama.com

One and One and Three Is One

What do you get when you mix one mystical Top Cow heroine, one dark-fantasy Top Cow anti-hero, and three Marvel superheroes? An extra-length oneshot tale that also features a lead-in to Top Cow's ***First Born,*** that's what!

Unholy Union, a one-shot by *Ron Marz & Michael Broussard,* brings together Witchblade, the Darkness, Ghost Rider, Doctor Strange, and the Incredible Hulk in a bizarre crossover adventure—one that takes place outside of the events of this summer's ***World War Hulk,*** of course.

When Jackie Estacado, the ill fated mob boss cursed with the inheritance of The Darkness, is brought into court, he's fairly certain he can beat the charges. Unfortunately for Jackie, Ghost Rider is not so easily escaped. If this clash wasn't enough to get fans pulses pounding, the Incredible Hulk is simultaneously rampaging through New York City and both Dani Baptiste, the current bearer of the Witchblade, and Sara Pezzini, the former bearer, must try and save the city while Doctor Strange monitors all these events with great interest.

"We packed as much as humanly possible into this one," writer *Ron Marz* said. "I think we ended up with a story that gives each of the characters a moment in the spotlight, includes plenty of over-the-top action, and even plants a seed for Top Cow's upcoming First Born storyline. So we've got all that, plus ample opportunity for artist *Michael Broussard* to show off what he's capable of. For a guy who's just beginning his career, Michael is amazingly

accomplished. He's the real deal, and I'm happy to be working with him."

"Every time we do something, we like to do it bigger and better", commented *Filip Sablik,* Vice President of Marketing & Sales, "Ron's really raised the stakes with this Marvel crossover by bringing together some unlikely characters in a fun summer movie blockbuster style one shot."

Unholy Union, a forty-page oneshot, is scheduled for late June release.

Red Snow Falls from Templesmith's Imagination

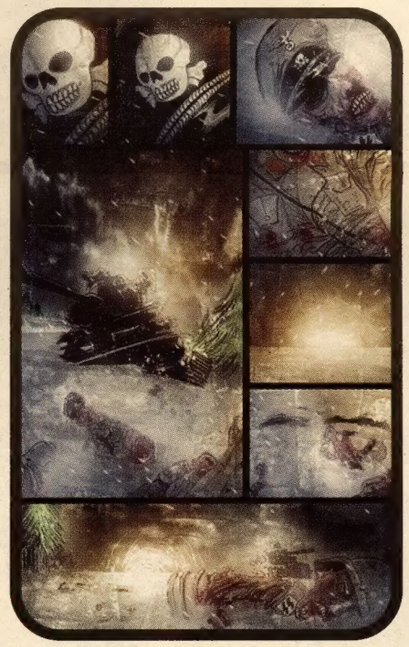
Fans of ***30 Days of Night*** have fond memories of the *Ben Templesmith* art that graced the original *Steve Niles*-written miniseries. They're bound to be pleased with the news that Templesmith plans to revisit this vampiric chiller (pun intended) in ***30 Days of Night: Red Snow***... and this time, he'll no only illustrate the series, he'll also write it!

"Yep, after years away, I'm officially coming back for one more shot at the things that gave me a career," Templesmith said on his blog. "And writing it as well as drawing it too. A prequel of sorts, without any baggage, and hopefully a good story that harkens back to the original book."

Templesmith explained how he ended up going solo on a new ***30 Days of Night*** tale. "I'm writing a lot more now, on various things, the most important being ***Wormwood: Gentleman Corpse,*** of course, which will be making a comeback with issue #8 later in the year, after this mini and a few other things!

"To be honest, I was happy to let ***30 Days*** rest from my perspective. I had said all I had to say on the book after the first trilogy, but curse your little black hearts, IDW kept asking me to go back and do the vampires again, and when you said "write it, too" I got thinking, and I realized I had a story I wanted to tell so I finally said yes."

This vampiric tale isn't set in modern-day Barrow, Alaska, however. "It's set during World War II, in the most brutal part of it, the Eastern Front. I did a bunch of research, and there's some history that really just falls into place for the story to set it up.



"I was initially going to do it during the Napoleonic era... which of course had a very similar situation in Russia (no one learns from history, do they?) but the WW2 circumstances worked even better. Operation Silver Fox, Nazis in the arctic, allied supplies needing to get through to keep the Russians in the war... all brilliant things. I thought I knew enough about the Eastern Front, (or the Great Patriotic War to the Russians) the most brutal war in history... but there was a lot of stuff going on right up near the arctic circle I'd never realized before I researched it."

Templesmith is sparing no effort on this series. "I plan on making it as horrific as the first one... which I haven't

really tried to do ever since the initial ***30 Days*** stuff. My work on ***Fell*** is moody, and ***Wormwood*** has more of a black humor vibe than horror. This one should be pure *death*—at least I'll be aiming for that, anyway."

30 Days of Night: Red Snow #1 is scheduled for August release. And as it turns out, this is just the first of *two* high-profile ***30 Days of Night*** projects coming up in the next few months...

Niles' Next 30 Days Partner Fits the Bill

With *Steve Niles'* original ***30 Days of Night*** artistic collaborator *Ben Templesmith* returning to the vampire saga for the aforementioned ***30 Days of Night: Red Snow,*** how can Niles stop his upcoming ***30 Days of Night: Beyond Barrow*** (set to debut a month after ***Red Snow)*** from being overshadowed?

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Well, Niles has a plan... and it involved one of the most acclaimed artists working in comics today: *Bill Sienkiewicz*. Niles has enlisted the legendary artist to illustrate the next chapter in the ***30 Days*** saga.

"Really, it's a dream come true," Niles told *Chris Ryall*. "He's the perfect artist for a ***30 Days*** book. Not many people know this, but Bill did the cover for the first book I ever did (or at least the first book I'll admit to doing) way back in a time we called 'the '80s.'

"I'm a total drooling fanboy over this. Bill is one of my all-time favorite artists, going all the way back to his ***Moon Knight*** stuff and then blowing my mind with his ***New Mutants***. Bill doing ***30 Days of Night*** is so perfect because he's the one who started the 'painted' comic, in a sense. Face it, without Bill *Sienkiewicz* there would be no *Dave McKean*, no *Jon Muth*, no *Ben Templesmith*. In an art sense, we've come full circle and now we're working with the master..."

Niles is obviously energized by the addition of Sienkiewicz to the ***30 Days*** creative team—and that renewed energy has inspired him to make this series the strongest ***30 Days*** tale to date. "There are things that are going to happen in this series that will really shock people. Bill and I aren't pulling any punches. Story-wise, we are returning to Barrow—but Barrow is a very different place now; plus, it's been discovered that vampires have been attacking in the Arctic Circle for centuries but when we explain how and why this has happened...and it's *not* what you think."

While this may be Sienkiewicz's highest-profile vampire series, it's not his first project involving the bloodthirsty undead. "Actually, I actually did two portfolios of vampires years ago, published through Grafitti Designs, *Bob Chapman's* company. I don't think we did a large print run of either portfolio, so they're pretty rare. Also, I have around forty sketchbooks I've filled since I first started art school in Newark, and over the years, vampires have appeared as a topic in the books in one form or another, from comedic, to sick, to just plain disturbing. Also, if you really think about it, a vampire is anything that drinks blood. Female mosquitoes are vampiric, as of course is the ubiquitous bat breed of infamy. Then there's the tick, the leech, just on and on and on. Nature is chockablock with vampires. So I'm just letting the vampires that I'm going to be doing, to 'evolve' as well. It's a Darwinian thing."

Sienkiewicz isn't emulating *Ben Templesmith* or any of earlier ***30 Days*** illustrators. "I'm not going in the direction of any of the artwork in previous ***30 Days*** books. This will very much be my own thing, whatever that turns out to be.

"I have some pretty creepy ideas, though, that keep me awake at night. Not from fear, but from that adrenaline-based rush of discovery of a new breed. It's a great Rorshach test for Self-examination, at the very least. I'm definitely a bit 'quirky.'"

While this is Sienkiewicz's first collaboration with *Steve Niles*, it won't be his last. "We are definitely in sync. Steve is just so great, just so talented. He's a terrific person and a wonderful collaborator. He jazzes me up, encourages risk and the sheer enjoyment in creativity—and we've wanted to work together for a long time, since his 'fly in my eye' days. This is just the beginning of what you'll be seeing from Steve and me—plus his fiancée, Sarah, besides being an absolute sweetheart, is also an incredibly talented artist. It's creative 'one-stop shopping.'"

30 Days of Night: Beyond Barrow #1 is slated for September release.

Ellis Goes Sleepless

Warren Ellis, well known for his work for WildStorm, Marvel, DC, Image, and Dark Horse, is one of several creators who has over the years produced a variety of projects for the smaller Avatar Press imprint. Later this year, Ellis will unveil a major new creator-owned project, ***Doktor Sleepless,*** from Avatar.

In his e-mail newsletter, Ellis described ***Doktor Sleepless*** as "my new longform science fiction comics novel for grown-ups like what you are... It will be monthly, and in full colour. It will sell for US$3.99, like an IDW book, because that's the cost of doing business.

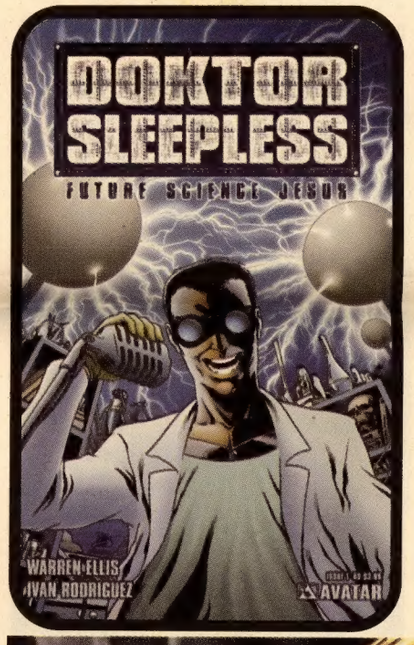
"It will have backmatter. Massive backmatter. ***Doktor Sleepless*** will be shadowed by a wiki at www.doktorsleepless.com and backmatter will move to and from the wiki. Sometimes it'll be seen in print before it goes on the wiki, sometimes not. Once the book's live, the wiki will be opened up for readers to add to it. You will see why.

"The artist is a little-seen European guy called *Ivan Rodriguez*. Good illustrator. Shaving the commercial sheen off him a bit, roughing him up. It's strong stuff."'

Ellis reports that Avatar will continue its controversial habit of offering variant covers for ever issue. "Live with it," Ellis wrote. "When people stop buying them, Avatar will stop doing them. Three covers per issue. There will be no confusion.

- "Standard cover, by Ivan.
- "Antique cover, by *Raul Casares*: pure black and white, done in a style reminiscent of *Bernie Wrightson's* ***Frankenstein*** illustrations. Wraparound. Yeah. No colour, except on the logo.
- "Warning cover: these covers are just graphics, based on the Fake Warning Signs that the Doktor is pasting over Heavenside in the story..."

Doktor Sleepless #1 is slated for July release.



Let's Be Philosophical About This...

Bad news for those who enjoy a little education with their comics: Evil Twin Comics has announced that the end of ***Action Philosophers*** is approaching!

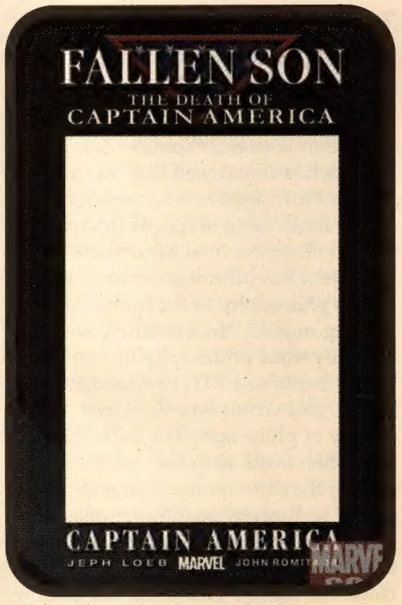
The ninth issue of the award-winning series will be the final installment of the irreverent-but-informative comic that brings philosophy to the funnybook-reading masses. "In a nutshell, we've basically done philosophy in comics form," explained ETC co-founder, co-owner, and writer *Fred Van Lente*. "The history of philosophy is a finite thing, and when faced with the options of ending the series and continuing indefinitely, perhaps by profiling thinkers that Ryan and I felt weren't quite up to snuff to what we had done in the past, we chose the former. Leave 'em beggin' for more, I always say." There will be one more trade volume collecting the final issues of the series.

The final issue of ***Action Philosophers,*** referred to by Van Lente as the "Lightning Round" issue, will focus on as many philosophers as he and artist *Ryan Dunlavey* can cram into a thirty-two-page comic.

Don't think that this means the end to Evil Twin's line of informative non-fiction comics, though. The company has announced two new projects—both informative, but quite different in scope.

First up for 2008 is ***Comic Book Comics,*** a comprehensive (and, of course, irreverent) history of comics, presented in comic book form. Readers will find a sample of this series in ***Awesome,*** Evil Twin Comics' anthology book.

The second project is ***Action Presidents,*** which puts the United States' chief executives in the spotlight in the same way that ***Action Philosophers*** focused on some of history's greatest thinkers.



Marvel Blanks Out on Fallen Son

Captain America is still dead, the Marvel Universe is still coming to terms with it in the pages of the five-part ***Fallen Son: The Death of Captain America*** series by *Jeph Loeb* and a variety of top artists... and Marvel is keeping the buzz going on this story event with the newly-announced ***Fallen Son: Death of Captain America—Captain America Special Blank Cover.*** Featuring the ***Fallen Son*** trade dress framing the blank white cover, this cover will allow fans the opportunity to have creators do an original sketch of Cap for the cover—or, if they're feeling artistic, they can design their very own variant cover! Look for it on May 16th.

Once More, from the Beginning!

A few weeks ago, ***CSN*** told you about IDW's plan to offer comprehensive reprintings of *Harold Gray's* ***Little Orphan Annie***—but at that time, it was undecided whether the IDW volumes would start from the very beginning or pick up where the long-out-of-print Fantagraphics volumes left off.

Now we can report that editor *Dean Mullaney* has made the call. "I'll start at the very beginning," Mullaney said. "Most collectors want me to start where Fantagraphics left off because they already have the old Cupples & Leon books, or the Tony Raiola reprints. But, those books were sold to hard-core collectors only . . . and they're chopped up, leaving out important parts of the stories.

"I see our editions as the definitive, complete ones, and catering not just to hardcore fans, but to (hopefully) an entirely new audience. I also think that, from a reader's point of view, it's better not to walk in in the middle of a run. If we start in 1935, new readers will ask, 'How did she meet Daddy? How did she find Sandy?' and all that. Personally, I think the early stories are charming, and essential to understanding what happens later."

Mullaney points out that these volumes will even appeal to collectors who have those earlier editions, "because this will be the first time that anyone has done all of the early dailies in complete form."

Look for the first volume of ***Little Orphan Annie*** this fall.

2007 Eisner Award Nominees Unveiled

A five-person panel of judges has pored over thousands of submitted books to select this year's Will Eisner Comic Industry Award nominees. The winners will be announced on Friday, July 27th, at the San Diego Comic Con. This year's nominees are:

Best Short Story

- "The Black Knight Glorps Again," by *Don Rosa*, in ***Uncle Scrooge #354*** (Gemstone)
- "Felix," by *Gabrielle Bell*, in ***Drawn & Quarterly Showcase 4*** (Drawn & Quarterly)

- "A Frog's Eye View," by *Bill Willingham & James Jean*, in ***Fables: 1001 Nights of Snowfall*** (Vertigo/DC)
- "Old Oak Trees," by *Tony Cliff*, in ***Flight 3*** (Ballantine)
- "Stan Lee Meets Spider-Man," by *Stan Lee, Oliver Coipel, & Mark Morales*, in ***Stan Lee Meets Spider-Man*** (Marvel)
- "Willie: Portrait of a Groundskeeper," by *Eric Powell*, in ***Bart Simpsons's Treehouse of Horror #12*** (Bongo)

Best Single Issue (or One-Shot)

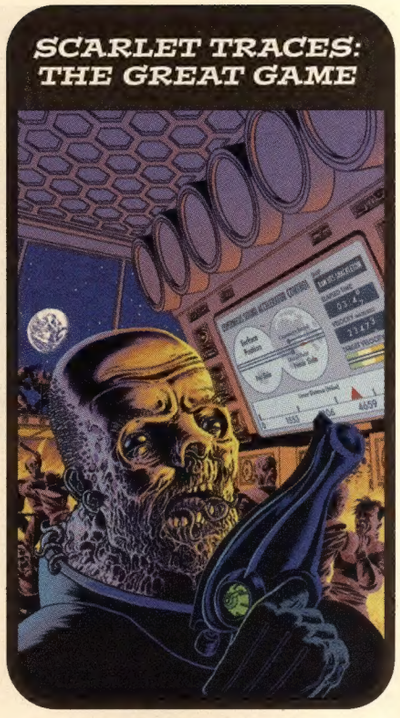
- ***Batman/The Spirit #1*** by *Jeph Loeb & Darwyn Cooke* (DC)
- ***A Late Freeze***, by *Danica Novgorodoff* (Danica Novgorodoff)
- ***The Preposterous Adventures of Ironhide Tom***, by *Joel Priddy* (AdHouse)
- ***Skyscrapers of the Midwest #3***, by *Joshua Cotter* (AdHouse)
- ***They Found the Car***, by *Gipi* (Fantagraphics)

Best Continuing Series

- ***All Star Superman***, by *Grant Morrison & Frank Quitely* (DC)
- ***Captain America***, by *Ed Brubaker & Steve Epting* (Marvel)
- ***Daredevil***, by *Ed Brubaker, Michael Lark, & Stefano Gaudiano* (Marvel)
- ***Naoki Urasawa's Monster***, by *Naoki Urasawa* (Viz)
- ***The Walking Dead***, by *Robert Kirkman & Charles Adlard* (Image)
- ***Young Avengers***, by *Allan Heinberg, Jim Cheung*, & various inkers (Marvel)

Best Limited Series

- ***Batman: Year 100***, by *Paul Pope* (DC)
- ***The Looking Glass Wars: Hatter M***, by *Frank Beddor, Liz Cavalier, & Ben Templesmith* (Desperado/Image)
- ***The Other Side***, by *Jason Aaron & Cameron Stewart* (Vertigo/DC)



- ***Scarlet Traces: The Great Game***, by *Ian Edginton & D'Israeli* (Dark Horse)
- ***Sock Monkey: The Inches Incident***, by *Tony Millionaire* (Dark Horse)

Best New Series

- ***Criminal***, by *Ed Brubaker & Sean Phillips* (Marvel Icon)
- ***East Coast Rising***, by *Becky Cloonan* (Tokyopop)
- ***Gumby***, by *Bob Burden & Rick Geary* (Wildcard)
- ***Jack of Fables***, by *Bill Willingham, Matthew Sturges, Tony Akins, & Andrew Pepoy* (Vertigo/DC)
- ***The Lone Ranger***, by *Brett Matthews & Sergio Cariello* (Dynamite)

Best Publication for a Younger Audience

- ***Chickenhare***, by *Chris Grine* (Dark Horse)
- ***Drawing Comics Is Easy (Except When It's Hard)***, by *Alexa Kitchen* (Denis Kitchen Publishing)
- ***Gumby***, by *Bob Burden & Rick Geary* (Wildcard)
- ***Moomin***, by *Tove Jansson* (Drawn & Quarterly)
- ***To Dance: A Ballerina's Graphic Novel***, by *Sienna Cherson & Mark Siegel* (Simon & Schuster)

Best Humor Publication

- ***Flaming Carrot Comics***, by *Bob Burden* (Desperado/Image)
- ***Onionhead Monster Attacks***, by *Paul Friedrich* (Hellcar)
- ***Schizo #4***, by *Ivan Brunetti* (Fantagraphics)
- ***Tales Designed to Thrizzle***, by *Michael Kupperman* (Fantagraphics)
- ***Truth Serum***, by *Jon Adams* (City Cyclops)

Best Anthology

•***Fables: 1001 Nights of Snowfall***, by *Bill Willingham* and various (Vertigo/DC)
•***Hotwire Comix and Capers #1***, edited by *Glenn Head* (Fantagraphics)
•***Japan as Viewed by 17 Creators***, edited by *Frédéric Boilet* (Fanfare/Ponent Mon)
•***Kramers Ergot 6***, edited by *Sammy Harkham* (Buenaventura Press)
•***Project: Romantic***, edited by *Chris Pitzer* (AdHouse)

Best Digital Comic

•***Bee***, in "Motel Art Improvement Service," by *Jason Little*, beecomix.com
•***Girl Genius***, by *Phil & Kaja Foglio*, www.girlgeniusonline.com
•***Minus***, by *Ryan Armand*, www.kiwis-bybeat.com/minus1.html
•***Phables***, by *Brad Guigar*, www.phables.com
•***Sam and Max***, by *Steve Purcell*, telltalegames.com/community/comics/samandmax/issue-3
•***Shooting War***, by *Anthony Lappe & Dan Goldman*, www.shootingwar.com

Best Graphic Album—New

•***American Born Chinese***, by *Gene Luen Yang* (First Second)
•***Billy Hazelnuts***, by *Tony Millionaire* (Fantagraphics)
•***Fun Home***, by *Alison Bechdel* (Houghton Mifflin)
•***Ninja***, by *Brian Chippendale* (Gingko Press)
•***Scrublands***, by *Joe Daly* (Fantagraphics)
•***The Ticking***, by *Renée French* (Top Shelf)

Best Graphic Album—Reprint

•***Absolute DC: The New Frontier***, by *Darwyn Cooke* (DC)
•***Castle Waiting***, by *Linda Medley* (Fantagraphics)
•***Mom's Cancer***, by *Brian Fies* (Abrams)
•***Shadowland***, by *Kim Deitch* (Fantagraphics)
•***Truth Serum***, by *Jon Adams* (City Cyclops)

Best Reality-Based Work

•***Fun Home***, by *Alison Bechdel* (Houghton Mifflin)
•***I Love Led Zeppelin***, by *Ellen Forney* (Fantagraphics)
•***Mom's Cancer***, by *Brian Fies* (Abrams)
•***Project X Challengers: Cup Noodle***, by *Tadashi Katoh* (Digital Manga)
•***Stagger Lee***, by *Derek McCulloch & Shepherd Hendrix* (Image)

Best Archival Collection/Project—Strips

•***The Complete Peanuts, 1959–1960, 1961–1962***, by *Charles Schulz* (Fantagraphics)
•***Mary Perkins On Stage***, by *Leonard Starr* (Classic Comics Press)
•***Moomin***, by *Tove Jansson* (Drawn & Quarterly)
•***Popeye: I Yam What I Yam***, by *E. C. Segar* (Fantagraphics)
•***Walt & Skeezix, vol. 2***, by *Frank King* (Drawn & Quarterly)

Best Archival Collection/Project—Comic Books

•***Abandon the Old In Tokyo***, by *Yoshihiro Tatsumi* (Drawn & Quarterly)
•***Absolute Sandman, vol. 1***, by *Neil Gaiman* and various (Vertigo/DC)
•***Art Out of Time: Unknown Comics Visionaries, 1900–1969***, by *Dan Nadel* (Abrams)
•***The Eternals***, by *Jack Kirby* (Marvel)
•***Ode to Kirihito***, by *Osamu Tezuka* (Vertical)

Best U.S. Edition of International Material

•***A.L.I.E.E.E.N.***, by *Lewis Trondheim* (First Second)
•***De:TALES***, by *Fábio Moon & Gabriel Bá* (Dark Horse)
•***Hwy 115***, by *Matthias Lehmann* (Fantagraphics)
•***The Left Bank Gang***, by *Jason* (Fantagraphics)
•***Pizzeria Kamikaze***, by *Etgar Keret & Asaf Hanuka* (Alternative)

Best U.S. Edition of International Material—Japan

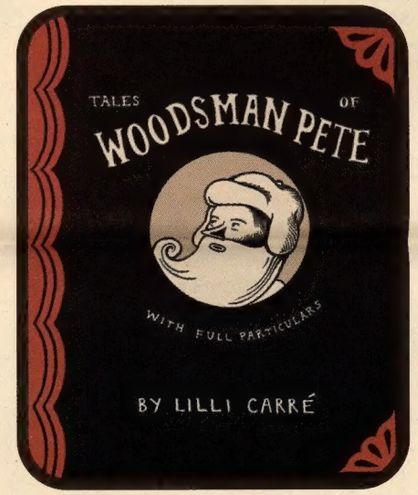
•***After School Nightmare***, by *Setona Mizushiro* (Go! Comi)
•***Antique Bakery***, by *Fumi Yoshinaga* (Digital Manga)
•***Naoki Urasawa's Monster***, by *Naoki Urasawa* (Viz)
•***Old Boy***, by *Garon Tsuchiya & Nobuaki Minegishi* (Dark Horse Manga)
•***Walking Man***, by *Jiro Taniguchi* (Fanfare/Ponent Mon)

Best Writer/Artist

•*Allison Bechdel*, ***Fun Home*** (Houghton Mifflin)
•*Renée French*, ***The Ticking*** (Top Shelf)
•*Gilbert Hernandez*, ***Love and Rockets, New Tales of Old Palomar*** (Fantagraphics); ***Sloth*** (Vertigo/DC)
•*Paul Pope*, ***Batman: Year 100*** (DC)
•*Joann Sfar*, ***Klezmer, Vampire Loves*** (First Second)

Best Writer

•*Ed Brubaker*, ***Captain America, Daredevil*** (Marvel); ***Criminal*** (Marvel Icon)
•*Bob Burden*, ***Gumby*** (Wildcard)
•*Ian Edginton*, ***Scarlet Traces: The Great Game*** (Dark Horse)
•*Grant Morrison*, ***All Star Superman, Batman, 52, Seven Soldiers*** (DC)
•*Bill Willingham*, ***Fables, Jack of Fables, Fables: 1001 Nights of Snowfall*** (Vertigo/DC)



Best Writer/Artist—Humor

•*Ivan Brunetti*, ***Schizo*** (Fantagraphics)
•*Lilli Carré*, ***Tales of Woodsman Pete*** (Top Shelf)
•*Michael Kupperman*, ***Tales Designed to Thrizzle*** (Fantagraphics)
•*Tony Millionaire*, ***Billy Hazelnuts*** (Fantagraphics); ***Sock Monkey: The Inches Incident*** (Dark Horse)
•*Lewis Trondheim*, ***A.L.I.E.E.E.N.*** (First Second); ***Mr. I*** (NBM)

Best Penciller/Inker or Penciller/Inker Team

•*Mark Buckingham/Steve Leialoha*, ***Fables*** (Vertigo/DC)
•*Tony Harris/Tom Feister*, ***Ex Machina*** (WildStorm/DC)
•*Niko Henrichon*, ***Pride of Baghdad*** (Vertigo/DC)
•*Michael Lark/Stefano Gaudiano*, ***Daredevil*** (Marvel)
•*Sonny Liew*, ***Wonderland*** (SLG)
•*Steven McNiven/Dexter Vines*, ***Civil War*** (Marvel)

Best Painter/Multimedia Artist (interior art)

•*Nicolas De Crecy*, ***Glacial Period*** (NBM)
•*Melinda Gebbie*, ***Lost Girls*** (Top Shelf)
•*Ben Templesmith*, ***Fell*** (Image); ***The Looking Glass Wars: Hatter M*** (Desperado/Image); ***Wormwood: Gentleman Corpse*** (IDW)
•*Jill Thompson*, "A Dog and His Boy" in ***The Dark Horse Book of Monsters;*** "Love Triangle" in ***Sexy Chix*** (Dark Horse);"Fair Division," in ***Fables: 1001 Nights of Snowfall*** (Vertigo/DC)
•*Brett Weldele*, ***Southland Tales: Prequel Saga*** (Graphitti); ***Silent Ghost*** (Markosia)

Best Cover Artist

•*John Cassaday*, ***Astonishing X-Men*** (Marvel); ***The Escapists*** (Dark Horse); ***The Lone Ranger*** (Dynamite)
•*Tony Harris*, ***Conan*** (Dark Horse); ***Ex Machina*** (WildStorm/DC)
•*James Jean*, ***Fables, Jack of Fables, Fables: 1001 Nights of Snowfall*** (Vertigo/DC)
•*Dave Johnson*, ***100 Bullets*** (Vertigo/DC); ***Zombie Tales, Cthulu Tales, Black Plague*** (Boom!)
•*J. G. Jones*, ***52*** (DC)

Best Coloring

•*Kristian Donaldson*, ***Supermarket*** (IDW)
•*Hubert*, ***The Left Bank Gang*** (Fantagraphics)
•*Lark Pien*, ***American Born Chinese*** (First Second)
•*Dave Stewart*, ***BPRD, Conan, The Escapists, Hellboy*** (Dark Horse); ***Action Comics, Batman/The Spirit, Superman*** (DC)
•*Chris Ware*, ***Acme Novelty Library #17*** (ACME Novelty)

Best Lettering

•*Ivan Brunetti*, ***Schizo*** (Fantagraphics)
•*Todd Klein*, ***Fables, Jack of Fables, Fables: 1001 Nights of Snowfall, Pride***

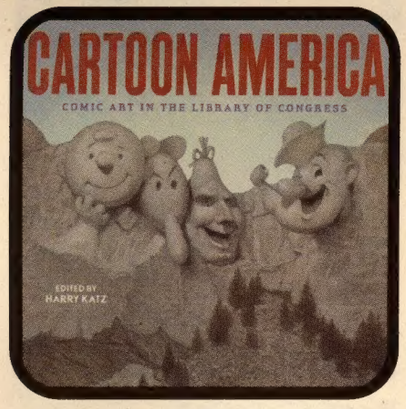
of Baghdad, Testament (Vertigo/DC); ***Fantastic Four: 1602, Eternals*** (Marvel); ***Lost Girls*** (Top Shelf)
•*Clem Robins,* ***BPRD, The Dark Horse Book of Monsters, Hellboy*** (Dark Horse); ***Loveless, 100 Bullets, Y: The Last Man*** (Vertigo/DC)
•*Richard Sala,* ***The Grave Robber's Daughter, Delphine*** (Fantagraphics)
•*Chris Ware,* ***Acme Novelty Library #17*** (ACME Novelty)

Special Recognition

•*Ross Campbell,* ***Abandoned*** (Tokyopop); Wet Moon 2 (Oni)
•*Svetlana Chmakova,* ***Dramacon*** (Tokyopop)
•*Hope Larson,* ***Gray Horses*** (Oni)
•*Dash Shaw,* ***The Mother's Mouth*** (Alternative)
•*Kasimir Strzepek,* ***Mourning Star*** (Bodega)

Best Comics-Related Periodical/Journalism

•***Alter Ego,*** edited by *Roy Thomas* (TwoMorrows)
•***Comic Art 8,*** edited by *Todd Hignite* (Buenaventura Press)
•***The Comics Journal,*** edited by *Gary Groth, Dirk Deppey, Michael Dean, & Kristy Valenti* (Fantagraphics)
•***The Comics Reporter,*** produced by *Tom Spurgeon & Jordan Raphael* (www.Comicsreporter.com)
•***¡Journalista!,*** produced by *Dirk Deppey* (Fantagraphics, www.tcj.com/journalista/)



Best Comics-Related Book

•***The Art of Brian Bolland,*** edited by *Joe Pruett* (Desperado/Image)
•***Cartoon America: Comic Art in the Library of Congress,*** edited by *Harry Katz* (Abrams)
•***Dear John: The Alex Toth Doodle Book,*** by *John Hitchcock* (Octopus Press)
•***In the Studio: Visits with Contemporary Cartoonists,*** by *Todd Hignite* (Yale University Press)
•***Wally's World,*** by *Steve Sarger & J. David Spurlock* (Vanguard)

Best Publication Design

•***Absolute DC: The New Frontier,*** designed by *Darwyn Cooke* (DC)
•***Castle Waiting,*** designed by *Adam Grano* (Fantagraphics)
•***Lost Girls,*** designed by *Matt Kindt & Brett Warnock* (Top Shelf)
•***Popeye: I Yam What I Yam,*** designed by *Jacob Covey* (Fantagraphics)
•***The Ticking,*** designed by *Jordan Crane* (Top Shelf)

Hall of Fame

Judges' Choices: *Robert Kanigher* and *Ogden Whitney*

Voters will choose four from among:

•*Ross Andru & Mike Esposito*
•*Dick Ayers*
•*Bernard Baily*
•*Matt Baker*
•*Wayne Boring*
•*Creig Flessel*
•*Harold Gray*
•*Irwin Hasen*
•*Graham Ingels*
•*Joe Orlando*
•*Lily Renée (Peters) Phillips*
•*Bob Powell*
•*Gilbert Shelton*
•*Cliff Sterrett*

Coming Comics—Image in July

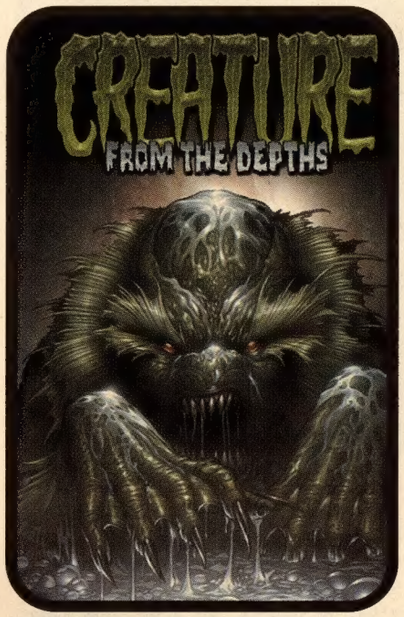
Robert Kirkman & Jason Howard's ***Astounding Wolf-Man*** continues in July with the release of the second issue of the lycanthropic hero's adventures—and for those who missed out on this series the first time around, Image is also offering the forty-page ***Astounding Wolf-Man #1 Director's Cut,*** which adds the material from the Free Comic Book Day edition as well as loads of bonus sketches, character designs and script excerpts.

Kyle Baker's exploits on the home front are spotlighted in ***The Bakers: Babies & Kittens.*** After Dad's attempts to eliminate a mouse prove ineffective, Mom and the kids adopt a cat against his wishes... and then proceed to hide it from him! If that's not bad enough, the situation gets even worse when Baby Jackie realizes that she's no longer the cutest thing in the house, leading to war between baby and kitten!

A down-on-his-luck Mafioso takes a dangerous job: stealing a body from his own mob boss. The situation goes downhill fast, though, when he discovers that the body isn't human! Find out what happens next in ***Black Cherry,*** a graphic novel by *Doug Tennapel.*

A prescription drug developer finds himself targeted for murder in ***The Chemist,*** a one-shot by *Jay Boose.* Why do they want him dead—and will he be able to survive when a mysterious woman further complicates his life?

When nerdy Oliver falls in love with beautiful Casey, he has no idea that she has been targeted for possession by Kavaleth, Lord of Kaos. This demonic love triangle is at the center of ***Consumed,*** a four-issue limited series by *Asa Shumskas-Tait, Dennis Budd, & Joe Caramanga.*



Take a heaping helping of ***Creature from the Black Lagoon,*** add a generous dollop of *H.P. Lovecraft* and a dash of EC Comics, and you have ***The Creature from the Depths,*** a one-shot by *Mark Kidwell.*

Image describes *Paolo Parente's* ***Dust*** two-issue limited series as "***The Dirty Dozen*** versus robots, zombies, and more." The WWII era story pits Allied ne'er-do-wells against Axis forces armed with weapons build from alien technology recovered from a crashed spaceship.

Warren Ellis & Ben Templesmith return to the police business with ***Fell #9.*** This time around, Richard Fell is drafted to serve as the closest thing Snowtown has to a hostage negotiator... not the best job for a man with a short fuse and a responsive trigger-finger!

Ron Marz & Stjepan Sejic chronicle the arrival of Sara Pezzini's baby in ***First Born,*** a three-part series beginning in July. Unknown to the former Witchblade bearer, though, the agents of the Angelus are seeking a new host... but first they want mob boss Jackie Estacado out of the way—permanently. How does this impact Sara's life? You might be surprised!...

In the graphic novel ***Full Color,*** *Mark Haven Britt* tells the story of a woman at the end of her rope, and the man who needs her help... if he can divert her from the self-destructive path she's chosen for herself! She's a worker determined to get back at her boss; he's a fugitive who double-crossed a drug dealer. Their story is the basis of this revenge-fueled morality play.

Some of *Joseph Michael Linsner's* sexiest art is featured in ***Girls & Goddesses: The Pin-Up Art of Joseph Michael Linsner.*** This hardcover, featuring 112-pages of pinup pulchritude, is available in a standard edition as well as a signed and numbered volume, complete with a color signing plate and eight bonus pages.

What's the best way to protect a witness? Relocate him—not only in a different place, but in a different time as well! That's the premise behind *Christopher E. Long & Ryan Winn's* four-part ***Hiding in Time.*** When hired assassins begin to travel through time to eliminate these witnesses, though, it's up to a technician in the now-defunct Time Portal Division to stop the murders.

Jack Kirby's final fully-envisioned series, ***Silver Star,*** will be available once again this summer, for the first time since its original Pacific Comics publication in the 1980s. ***Jack Kirby's Silver Star*** collects Kirby's entire cosmic adventure series in a single 144-page hardcover, complete with *Mike Royer* inks and reconstructed colors by *Erik Larsen.*

A survivalist is sent to a prison run as a livestock farm by bloodthirsty vampires in ***Nightfall,*** a graphic novel by *Scott O. Brown & Ferran Xalabarder.*

Creator *Scott Morse* assembles his sketches, concepts, paintings, and ideas in the delightfully eclectic ***Scrap Mettle,*** a four-hundred page full color hardcover that offers a peek into his fertile imagination.

Image collected editions include:
•***The Age of Bronze Volume Three: Betrayal,*** collecting *Eric Shanower's* ***Age of Bronze #s 20-26;***
•***America Jr. Volume One,*** collecting the first 150 strips of the popular webcomic by *Nick Capetanakis, Todd Livingston,* and *Brendon & Brian Fraim;*

•***Bomb Queen Volume Two: Queen of Hearts,*** collecting the second series of *Jimmie Robinson* ***Bomb Queen*** tales, along with the ***Bomb Queen Vs. Blacklight*** oneshot;
•***Capes Volume One: Punching the Clock,*** reprinting ***Capes #s 1-3*** and the 72-page backup story from ***Invincible,*** supplemented by oodles of pages of bonus material;
•***The Collected normalman,*** featuring every single story and drawing ever produced by *Jim Valentino* featuring this normal man in a superheroic world;
•***Endgame Volume One,*** collecting ***Tomb Raider #25, Witchblade #60, Evo #1,*** and the ***Endgame Prelude*** along with bonus material;

•***The Godland Celestial Edition HC,*** a deluxe oversized hardcover featuring the first twelve issues of the *Joe Casey-Tom Scioli* series, along with forty pages of bonus material; and
•***Meltdown: The Definitive Collection,*** reprinting the end-of-his-days super-hero saga by *David Schwartz & Sean Wang.*

Ins & Outs

In: A fourth printing of ***Justice League of America #1*** (featuring a recolored version of the variant cover by *Michael Turner)* and a second printing of ***Justice League of America #2*** (featuring a pencils-only version of the variant cover by *Michael Turner*) are in the works at DC. Both are slated for mid-May release.
Out: ***Nova #1,*** which has sold out from Marvel; there are no plans for a second printing at this time.
In: A third printing of ***Buffy the Vampire Slayer #1*** and a second printing of ***Buffy the Vampire Slayer #2,*** as Dark Horse scrambles to meet the incredible demand for this *Joss Whedon* series.
Out: ***After the Cape #2*** has followed in the footsteps of the first issue, selling out in a matter of days. No plans for a second printing.
In: Second printings of *Jay Faerber's* ***Dynamo 5 #s 1 & 2,*** necessitated by the rapid sellouts of both issues.
Out: ***Iron Man #16,*** which has—like the preceding issue—sold out from Marvel in mere days. *Unlike* the preceding issue, though, there is no reprinting planned for this one...
In: A second printing of ***Frank Frazetta's Death Dealer #1;*** the new printing will feature a gold-foil enhanced version of the first printing Frazetta cover.
Out: ***Loners #1,*** which has sold out from Marvel. No plans for a second printing...

Brant Parker Passes

Brant Parker, co-creator of ***The Wizard of Id,*** died on April 15th at the age of 86, succumbing to complications related to Alzheimer's and a stroke suffered last year. Parker died just over a week after his ***Id*** partner *Johnny Hart* succumbed to a stroke. Parker's loose, fluid art style helped to define ***The Wizard of Id*** from its beginning in 1964.

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35TH ANNIVERSARY ISSUE
CELEBRATING SONJA'S 35 YEARS IN COMICS

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Art by: HOMS & VINICIUS ANDRADE
Covers By: ART ADAMS with LAURA MARTIN, ARIEL OLIVETTI, PAUL RENAUD & MEL RUBI

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